

## Healing and Rebuilding

# Reconstruction Begins

After emergency relief comes reconstruction of towns, farms, fishing fleets, industries, schools and roads, estimated to cost \$11 billion.

**A**s U.S. and other aid agencies distributed emergency relief, plans were being made to help reconstruct the cities, villages, farms and families torn apart by the invading sea waves.

Rebuilding could not begin right away. Six weeks after the tsunami, one rarely heard the banging of hammers.

In the utter ruins of downtown Banda Aceh, where hundreds of bodies still floated up to the surface after debris was removed by excavators, only one hardy family was rebuilding.

Local governments around the Indian Ocean discouraged or forbade rebuilding until they could decide where it was safe to live. Many feared to return close to the sea. Sri Lanka set a 100 meter (100 yard) setback from the sea for its southern coast and 200 meters (200 yards) for the hard-hit eastern coast. But it was not easy to identify replacement sites for the displaced. Indonesian authorities spoke of possibly a one or two kilometer safety zone which would require relocating thousands of people up to 20 or more kilometers away.

The first steps towards reconstruction were taken by thousands of people in blue or yellow T-shirts cleaning up the mud and debris under "cash-for-work" aid programs in Aceh and Sri Lanka.

The workers had lost their homes and family members, but the clean-up jobs gave them \$5 to \$7 each day—money that would revive the local economy when spent on cigarettes, sweets or school notebooks.

Micro-finance programs were planned as another early step, so people could rebuild fishing boats, fix damaged houses and reopen businesses.

The next reconstruction activity started within weeks of the tsunami. Since many local government staffers died in the tsunami, aid groups trained replacement officials. They also helped local governments repair and replace damaged offices, vehicles, computers and telephones; and they supported planning of long-range repairs to ports, roads and other infrastructure.

Next, international aid groups working under the leadership of the World Bank, of-

fered technical assistance to help move the displaced to new land, provide schools and facilities for them in new areas and be sure they had jobs in agriculture, tourism, fishing and other industries.

Financial and technical aid from the United States and other donors was being drawn up to fix schools, roads, bridges, and water treatment plants as well as small projects such as clinics, schools and markets.

Lastly, reconstruction will focus on preparing local governments to cope with a future disaster.

In addition, since in some places it appeared that mangroves, other natural barriers and sea walls reduced the destructive impact of tsunami waves, reconstruction will be environmentally-sound and develop infrastructure that is more resilient to future natural disasters.

Development experts say that the talent and resilience of people struck by disaster are the most powerful forces for reconstruction.

A plan for U.S. reconstruction aid to tsunami-affected countries, drafted even as the U.S. Congress considered the Bush Administration request for \$950 million in aid, included \$166 million to resettle more than 1 million homeless people. That includes \$40 million for housing. Already USAID funds have been used by the International Organization for Migration to build demonstration versions of housing in Indonesia—four rooms made from wood panels topped by a corrugated metal roof, all bolted to earthquake-proof cement posts.

The plan calls for about \$100 million to restart economic activity by support for fishing, tourism, food processing, agriculture and other business.

Another \$20 million would help people with food, water and short-term work as they move from camps to new homes and permanent jobs.

Reconstruction will also tackle big-ticket projects such as fixing dozens of bridges and rebuilding roads destroyed by the tsunami—principally in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

World Bank-Asian Development Bank assessments in those two countries—augmented by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and USAID rapid appraisals—put infrastructure reconstruction costs at \$6 billion.

Former Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton—who were asked by the current President Bush to raise funds for tsunami relief and flew to visit the damage in the Indian Ocean countries—estimated reconstruction costs to be as high as \$11 billion.

Private U.S. donations of about \$1.2 billion, private aid from other countries and official government aid, are supporting this global task.



BEN BARBER / USAID

**ISLAMIC MOVEMENT:** Members of the Muhammadiyah moderate Islamic movement clean up a school in Banda Aceh under a U.S.-funded "cash-for-work" program.



DOROTHY RAYBURN / USAID

**SPINNING ROPE:** Sri Lankan tsunami survivors in a U.S.-funded self-help project.





IRWIN FEDRIANSYAH / USAID

**REBUILDING IN THE RUINS:** Banda Aceh man salvages lumber to rebuild—first of a handful to try and re-occupy their land.

## Reconstruction Examples

### ● Sri Lanka Tourism:

A media campaign to encourage tourism was launched with \$3.4 million from USAID. Tourism provides thousands of jobs to the local economy.

### ● Aceh Governance:

Banda Aceh is getting aid to plan for recovery and promote citizen participation. Syiah Kuala University will assist with property rights issues.

● **Indian Salt:** USAID is helping sea salt producers in Tamil Nadu remove sand and clay from evaporation pans.

● **Thai Water:** U.S. aid is helping provide drinking water to 250 Thai families whose water system was destroyed by the tsunami.

● **Sri Lanka Shelter:** U.S. aid has built 1,500 shelters and plans to build 9,000 more units. The 200 square foot shelters cost \$400 and are to last two years.



USAID

**THAI COMMUNITY:** Villagers from Bang Nam Khem Muang Camp draw up plans for reconstruction.



MIKEY NIMAN / U.S. MARINE CORPS

**SCHOOL CLEARING:** A U.S. marine in Gintota, Sri Lanka clears away rubble of a school so it can be rebuilt.